
State Water Resources Control Board

October 19, 2026

Dear Colleagues and Members of the California Bar,

We are writing to seek your support and participation in an important effort to expand pro bono representation for parties who appear in proceedings before the AHO.

The AHO was legislatively created to conduct neutral, fair, and efficient hearings on water right matters. Cases before the AHO often involve complex issues that can significantly impact a party's rights, obligations, and access to water and, in enforcement matters, may involve substantial monetary penalties. Unrepresented parties can have difficulty navigating through these AHO proceedings. The AHO is committed to ensuring fair, transparent, and accessible proceedings, and therefore we are seeking more pro bono lawyers. Pro bono representation furthers due process, strengthens the integrity of this office, and supports public confidence in the legal system.

We recognize that you and your firms face substantial professional demands and obligations to existing clients. Participation in an AHO proceeding may, however, offer a valuable opportunity for professional development, particularly for attorneys who are early in their career or are otherwise new to the water bar. Attorneys may gain experience in water right proceedings, enforcement proceedings, and the AHO's newly formalized alternative dispute resolution proceedings. If there is sufficient interest, we would be pleased to schedule a workshop to provide training and answer questions about the AHO hearing process to encourage attorneys who may otherwise be unfamiliar with our process to volunteer their time.

Currently, the AHO has several pending enforcement matters involving unrepresented parties, so we have an immediate need for volunteer attorneys who would be willing to consider representation of one or more of these parties at no cost or at a reduced rate. If you are willing to consider such representation and the AHO may transmit your contact information to these parties, we would greatly appreciate an e-mail to the AHO stating your interest as soon as possible. In many instances, a few hours of focused guidance can materially improve a party's understanding of the administrative process and their ability to present their case effectively. Most AHO hearings occur virtually on Zoom webinar, allowing an attorney anywhere in the state to represent a pro bono client.

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | ERIC OPPENHEIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The AHO webpage includes a list of attorneys who may be willing to provide pro bono representation and consultation in proceedings before the AHO:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/administrative_hearings_office/docs/aho-list-pro-bono-attorneys.pdf. Many of you have asked to be included on this list, and we are grateful for your participation. With this letter, we are updating and seeking to expand that list.

If you or any other California-barred lawyer are willing to be added to our general pro bono list posted to the AHO's webpage, please send an email to AdminHRGoffice@waterboards.ca.gov with the following information.

I am interested in offering counsel or representation for the following types of proceedings (select as many as apply):

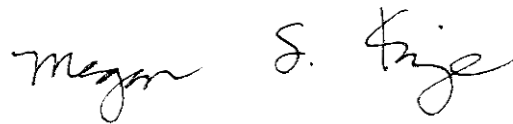
- *Water right licensing and permitting*
- *Water right enforcement*
- *Cannabis enforcement*
- *Professional licensing enforcement proceedings*
- *Other enforcement proceedings*
- *Mediations*
- *Any/all*

As members of the California water bar, we are honored to work on a daily basis with thoughtful and skilled practitioners who exhibit a degree of professionalism and integrity that is unmatched in many other areas of law. We are asking for your assistance from our shared commitment to these standards and in support of the work of this office.

Sincerely,



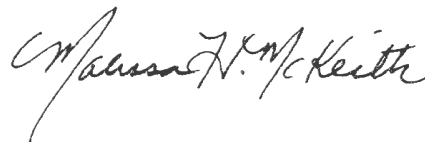
Nicole L. Kuenzi
Presiding Hearing Officer



Megan S. Knize
Senior Hearing Officer



Cody Phillips
Hearing Officer



Malissa Hathaway McKeith
Senior Hearing Officer and Lead Mediator

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